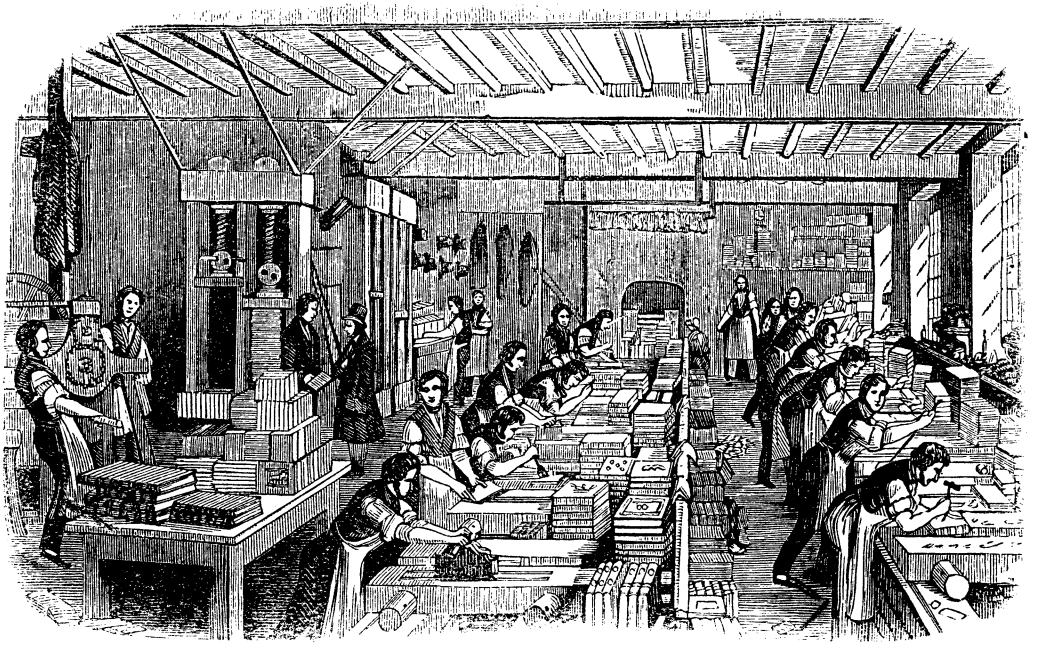
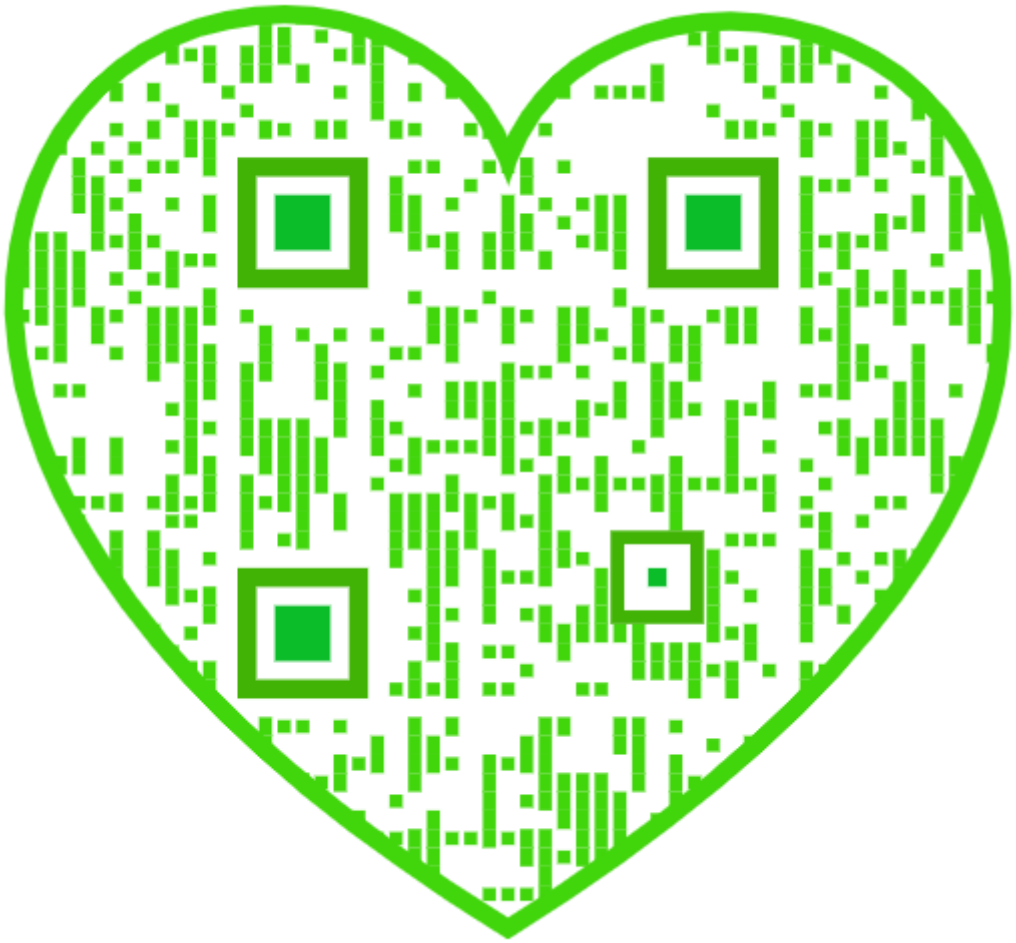


THE NEW YORK BOOK-BINDERY



THE

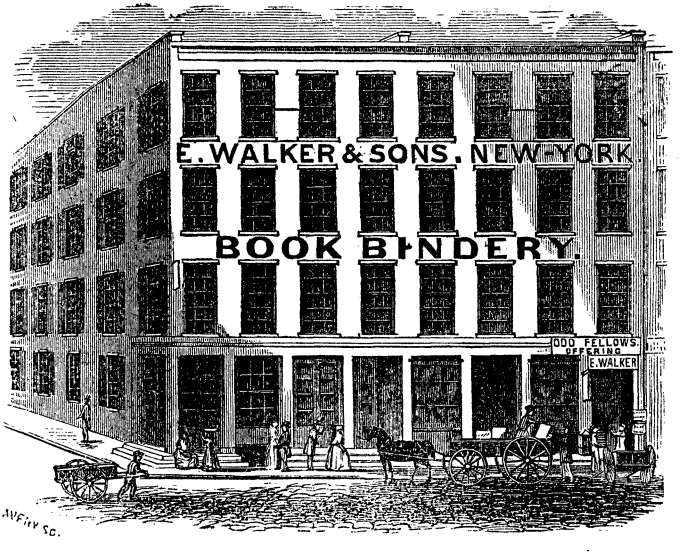
ART OF BOOK-BINDING,

ITS RISE AND PROGRESS;

INCLUDING

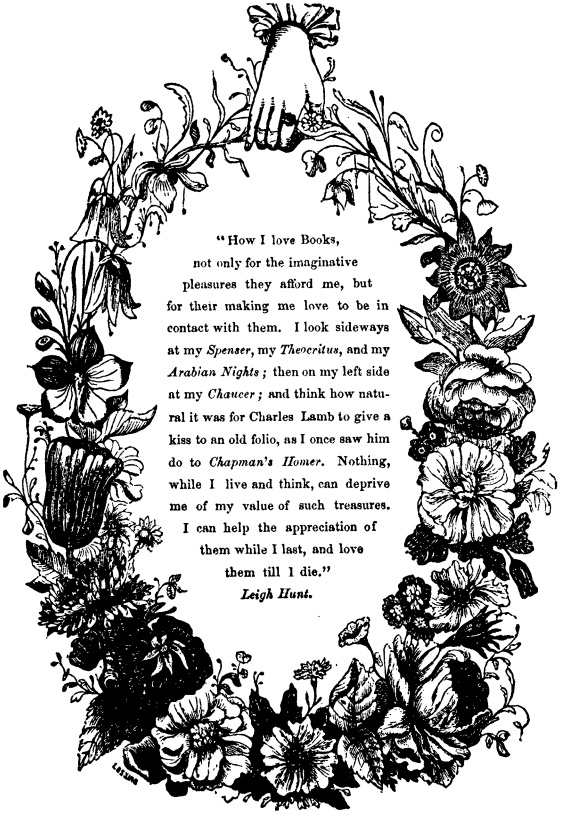
A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE

NEW YORK BOOK-BINDERY.



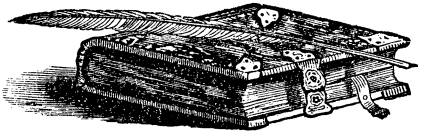
NEW YORK:
E. WALKER & SONS, 114 FULTON STREET.

1850.



"How I love Books,
not only for the imaginative
pleasures they afford me, but
for their making me love to be in
contact with them. I look sideways
at my *Spenser*, my *Theocritus*, and my
Arabian Nights; then on my left side
at my *Chaucer*; and think how natu-
ral it was for Charles Lamb to give a
kiss to an old folio, as I once saw him
do to *Chapman's Homer*. Nothing,
while I live and think, can deprive
me of my value of such treasures.
I can help the appreciation of
them while I last, and love
them till I die."

Leigh Hunt.



THIS little manual, descriptive of the origin and progress of book-binding, has been prepared by the publisher, expressly for the use of his numerous patrons, in the belief that it will be found to comprise much curious and interesting matter relative to the bibliopegistic art, which will prove acceptable to all true lovers of books. "Books," says Milton, "are among the sweetest luxuries of our world;" and Channing affirms that "in the best books, great men talk to us, with us, and give us their most precious thoughts. Books are the voices of the distant and the dead. Books are the true levellers. They give to all who will faithfully use them the society and the presence of the best and greatest of our race. No matter how poor I am; no matter though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling. If learned men and poets will enter and take up their abode under my roof—if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of Paradise; and Shakspeare open to me the worlds of imagination, and the workings of the human heart; and Franklin enrich me with his practical wisdom—I shall not pine for want of intellectual companionship, and I may become a cultivated man, though excluded from what is called the best society in the place where I live." Books have in all ages commanded the veneration of mankind; and this appreciation of their value has been commonly evinced by the skill and ingenuity devoted to their decoration. Nor is this devotion to the internal and external adornment of books peculiar to

past ages; it is no less a characteristic of our own, when the resources of taste and inventive art have become well nigh exhausted in the lavish expenditure of costly embellishment which distinguishes many of our modern literary productions. There are, however, exceptions to the rule.

Good books, it has been well observed, deserve good binding; did they but contain the power of speech, as well as all manner of tongues, how many tales of woe would they relate to us of the neglect and destruction they have suffered, merely for the want of a decent covering, which would have secured to them the friendship and esteem of the scholar, as well as universal admiration.

HISTORIC SKETCH

OF THE

ART OF BOOK-BINDING

THE art and mystery of book-binding, from its connexion with the progress of literary enterprise, necessarily possesses a peculiar interest and importance in the world of letters. A few brief notices of the early scribes, illuminators, and publishers, may not therefore be deemed inappropriate, as introductory to the following sketch of the book-binding art.

The literary profession originated even in classic times, when an extensive traffic was carried on in MSS., by the Scribes and Copyists; it also flourished during the Saxon era, many eminent names being on record of transcribers in the seventh and eighth centuries. Books in their present form were invented, it is said, by Attalus, King of Pergamus, in 887.

The diffusive spread of knowledge, and the founding of monasteries, gave increased importance to this branch of commerce, although the earliest mention of a "public dealer in books" is of one Peter de Blois, who lived about 1170. He was a distinguished scholar, having been remarkable for his great erudition.

Bibliopoles of the olden time exercised their calling under the supervision and censorship of the Universities; and books were then, moreover, rare and costly luxuries—the prerogative of the privileged few; now they have become the common property of mankind.

During the middle ages, the booksellers were called *Stationarii* at the Universities of Paris and Bologna; but the first regularly matriculated bookseller was doubtless Faustus, for he is said

to have carried his books for sale to the Monasteries in France, and elsewhere. The first bookseller who purchased MSS. for publication, and speculated in the enterprise (not possessing a press of his own), was John Otto, of Nuremberg, who flourished in 1516. Caxton, the father of the English press, however, who lived 1471–1491, and who had twenty-four presses in his office at Westminster Abbey, doubtless issued many new and original productions at his own risk, as well as older works, and the emanations of his own pen.

The history of the publishing business, from the invention of the "divine art" to the close of the seventeenth century, is graced with a luminous train of illustrious names, as author-booksellers, whose literary attainments and critical acumen shed lustre alike on both the pursuits of author and publisher.

From the days of Caxton to the accession of James I., the press appears to have been to no inconsiderable extent devoted to the printing of classical works; this preference for the literary stores of antiquity, however, was not restricted to the English press, it prevailed to a still greater

degree among the printers of Germany, Italy, and France. The labors of the Alduses, the Stephenses, and the Plantins, were thus consecrated, till at the dawn, and during the era of the Reformation, the printing of the Sacred Scriptures, in a great measure, divided the attention of the printers. The celebrated names of Wynkin de Worde, Pynson, Weir, Day, Dunton, Tonson, Lintot, and Ballard, with others, form a luminous train of illustrious bibliopoles, whose literary enterprises occupy a conspicuous feature in early literary history, for some of them contributed in no small degree to enrich numerically the estate of English literature—Wynkin de Worde, the able associate and successor of Caxton, having printed four hundred and eight distinct works, while Pynson, Day, and others, issued more than half that number, each. Between the years 1474 and 1600, it has been estimated about 350 printers flourished in England and Scotland, and that the products of their several presses amounted in the aggregate to 10,000 distinct productions. At the great fire of London in 1666, the booksellers of Paternoster Row sustained a serious loss—as heavy a cala-

mity to them, as the destruction of the Alexandrian Library was to the ancients. Dwelling in such close proximity to St. Paul's, they were accustomed to deposit large quantities of books, for their supposed greater safety, in the vaults of the Old Cathedral; these, at the time of the fire, were valued by Evelyn at £200,000.

In ancient times, a great variety of materials were used in making books; plates of lead and copper, bricks, wooden planks, and the thin part of the bark of the lime, ash, and maple. From hence is derived the term *liber*, which signifies the inner bark of trees; and as these were rolled up to render them portable, they were called *volumen*, or volume—a name afterwards given to the like rolls of papyrus, parchment, and paper. The two earliest works of which we have any knowledge are the Pentateuch and the Iliad—one being part of a divine revelation, and the other one of the greatest achievements of human genius.

Josephus speaks of two columns—the one of stone, the other of brick,—on which the children of Seth wrote their inventions and astronomical discoveries. Writing, according to the same

authority, was invented by Seth. Porphyry makes mention of some pillars, preserved in Crete, on which the ceremonies practised by the Corybantes in their sacrifices were recorded. Hesiod's works were originally written upon tables of lead, and deposited in the Temple of the Muses in Bœotia. The Ten Commandments delivered to Moses, we are informed in Holy Writ, were written upon stone; and Solon's laws were recorded upon wooden planks. Tables of wood, box, and ivory were commonly used for the purpose among the ancients: when of wood, they were frequently covered with wax, to render the surface easier for inscribing. The art of making paper from fibrous matter, reduced to a pulp in water, which is the present method, appears to have been invented by the Chinese about the year 95 A.D. Previously to this time, the inner bark of the bamboo was used, and a style or bodkin then supplied the place of the pen. Before the invention of paper from cotton, which occurred about the year 1000 of the Christian era, the Egyptian *papyrus*, from which the term paper is derived, was the material principally used for writing purposes. The papyrus

consisted of thin consecutive coats, or pellicles, that surround the stock of this reedy plant; the slips were laid out to dry, and then polished for use. Papyrus was a great article of commerce in the East; it was used, indeed, throughout Europe, and extensively at Rome. Among other works, the New Testament was originally written upon this fabric. Numerous specimens of ancient writings upon papyrus are still extant; some Greek MSS., supposed to have been written about the year 135 B.C., some Egyptian MSS. at Leyden, and others at the Vatican, of as remote a date as 646 years B.C. Vast numbers were discovered among the ruins of Herculaneum. Parchment, usually made of the skins of sheep, derives its name from Pergamus, where it is said to have been invented by Eumenes, about 197 B.C., in consequence of the scarcity of the papyrus. To such delicate texture was it susceptible of being brought, that Cicero is said to have seen a copy of the *Iliad* transcribed so minutely upon it, as to be placed within a nut-shell. Multitudes of valuable MSS. were destroyed in Italy and other parts of southern Europe during the 5th century, and for nearly a

thousand years literature was little cultivated in Europe. A few monks and others occupied themselves with transcribing the more celebrated productions, and many of these caligraphists attained to great skill in their art. Thus the Scriptures were handed down to our times, as well as most of the Greek and Roman classics; and we have to thank those religious ascetics for the preservation of most of our literary treasures.

So precious were manuscripts in those days, that an Anglo-Saxon bishop, named Wilfred, had the books of the four evangelists copied out in letters of gold upon purple parchment; and such value did he set upon the work when it was completed, that he kept it in a case of gold adorned with precious stones. Few men, excepting the monks, were capable of writing in those early times. We find a certain king of Kent, affixing to a charter the sign of a cross, and causing the scribe to add below, that it was on account of his ignorance of writing that he could not sign his name.

Prior to the invention of printing, as books were multiplied by the slow process of transcribing, during the middle ages, this task was per-

formed by monks aud illuminators with singular devotion, for they sometimes were occupied for years in the writing and embellishment of these productions. Books in those days were few indeed, as well as readers, but the process was laborious in the extreme, compared with the present times. Nor are the attractions of genius alone deemed sufficient to satisfy the taste of the age; the choicest resources of decorative art are put in requisition for the internal and external embellishment of the several products of the mind. In the middle ages, even bishops and monks loved to engage in the art of book-binding. Reference is made to the fact by Bede, who cites an instance of a superbly illuminated Prayer-book, the binding of which was of pure ivory, studded with gems. There were also trading binders, called *Ligatores.*

Our forefathers used to exhibit the leaves instead of the backs of their books, being ambitious of displaying the silken strings and gold or silver clasps. The art of ornamenting the exterior was carried to a lavish extent; jewels as well as precious metals, were employed to evince their splendor.

Peacham advises as follows:—"Have a care of keeping your books handsome and well bound, not casting away over much in their gilding and stringing, for ostentation sake,—like the prayer bokes of girles and gallants, which are carried to church for their outsides."

There are many instances upon record of sumptuous bindings; some specimens of missals are still extant, with covers of solid silver, gilt. Gold, relics, ivory, velvet, large bosses of brass, and other costly ornaments, were formerly used for the exterior decoration of books. Queen Elizabeth was very choice over a little tome, the composition of Catharine Parr, which was inclosed in a solid gold cover, and which she used to carry about with her as a "pet book," attached to her side by a golden chain. The manuscript copy of the Gospels, used originally at the Coronation of Henry I., and down to that of Edward VI., which is said to be still extant, is of a different description, being inclosed within oaken boards, an inch thick, fastened together with thongs of leather and brass bosses—a dainty object for kingly lips to kiss, in token of their

submission to their coronation oath. This book was literally bound in *boards.*

Illuminated books were in much repute from the sixth to the seventeenth century. A monk was employed thirty years in the monastery of St. Audeon, on one missal. It was finished 1682.

Many of the manuscripts of the mediæval age were magnificent in the extreme; sometimes they were inscribed with liquid gold on parchment of the richest purple, and adorned with brilliant illuminations of exquisite workmanship. All this prodigal decoration, however, tended greatly to enhance the price of books to an extent which to us would sound enormously extravagant. Thanks to the invention of "the divine art" and the agency of steam, we now may multiply books to an almost unlimited extent, and at an incredibly trifling expense. The rich and elaborate illuminations of the laborious monks and scribes of olden times we also re-produce in all their gorgeousness and splendor, at almost a fraction of their original cost. The same remark applies with equal force to the external decorations in binding of books; the

most exquisite skill having been evinced in the emblematic devices lavished upon them.

Book-binding has been deemed one of the most difficult arts; it is incontestably one requiring no little care, neatness, taste, and skill, as may be easily seen in the three great characteristics of good binding,—solidity, elasticity, and elegance. This will be also evinced in the various processes of coloring and preparing the leather, the curious and ingenious devices for decorating the covers, and marbling or gilding the edges of books. *Forwarding* has ever been deemed the great desideratum of all good binding. The early binders were very rigid upon this point, as may be seen by the following extract from the Code of laws of 1750, referring to this particular. "Be it held, that the master binders do sew all their books with thread and real bands, do back them with parchment, and not paper; and in case of infringement the said books shall be done again at the expense of the infringer; who shall besides be condemned to a fine of thirty pounds for each volume." Care in this respect is of the utmost importance, when the book is valuable, either from its rarity or the

splendor of its embellishment, such works daily augmenting in price; for if carelessly or badly bound, the re-binding, and consequent cropping the book down by re-cutting the edges, tends considerably to depreciate its value,—a good margin being "a primary object with the genuine book collector."

Dr. Dibdin, who, from his long and intimate connexion with the most celebrated book collectors of Europe, may be regarded as no mean authority, in speaking of book-binding, thus pleads its claims. "The general appearance of one's library is by no means a matter of mere foppery or indifference; it is a sort of cardinal point to which the tasteful collector does well to take heed. You have a right to consider books as to their *outsides*,—with the eye of a painter; because this does not militate against the proper use of the contents." This learned pundit recommends *russia* for works on antiquity, architecture, or history, and light colored calf for works in belles-lettres.

Particular departments of literature have their respective kinds of binding.; for example, theological works are usually bound in dark blue,

purple, black, or some sedate color. Law books have their established livery, known as law binding, the leather being left its natural color, light brown or fawn color; and the edges of the leaves white. Dutch binding is where the backs are of vellum or parchment. Some collectors have adopted a peculiar livery for the binding of their entire libraries—sometimes half calf or half morocco, gilt. The styles of binding for the various classes of literature are designated by the terms, *filleted*, *lettered gilt*, *half extra*, *super extra*, according to the quality and style of ornament bestowed upon a book. Stationery or blank book binding is also another distinct branch of the art.

"It is yet with books," says Hume, "as with women, where a certain plainness of dress and style is more engaging than that glare of paint and apparel, which so dazzle the eye, but reach not the affections;" although it cannot be denied that most are delighted with an elegantly bound book. The casket should be worthy of the gem it incloses; or, as Shakspeare says,

"A book in many's eyes doth share the glory
That in gold clasps locks in the golden story."

When the art of book-binding was first invented, it is impossible to ascertain. Phillatius, a learned Athenian, was the first who pointed out the use of a particular glue for fastening the leaves of a book together—an invention which his countrymen thought of such importance, that they erected a statue to his memory. The most ancient mode of binding consisted in glueing the different leaves together, and attaching them to cylinders of wood, round which they were rolled: this is called Egyptian binding, and continued to be practised long after the age of Augustus. This method is yet in use in oriental countries, and in Jewish synagogues, where they still continue to write books of the law on strips of vellum sewed together, so as to form only one long page; on each extremity of which is a roller, furnished with clasps of gold or silver.

The Romans carried the art of book-binding to a considerable perfection; and some of their public officers had books called Diptychs, in which their acts were written. An old writer says that about the Christian era the books of the Romans were covered with red, yellow, green,

and purple leather, and decorated with silver and gold. In the 13th century, some of the Gospels, missals, and service books for the use of the Greek and Roman churches were covered in gold and silver; some were also enamelled and enriched with precious stones and pearls of great value.

In the 15th century, when Art was universal, such men as Albert Durer, Raffaelle, and Giulio Romano decorated books. The use of calf and morocco binding seems to have followed the introduction of printing; and there are many printed books bound in calf with oaken boards. About the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries they were stamped with gold and blind tools. The earliest of these tools generally represent figures, such as Christ, St. Paul, coats of arms, &c.,—according to the contents of the book.

In the reign of Henry VIII., about 1538, Grafton the printer undertook to print the Great Bible; for which purpose he went to Paris, there not being sufficient men or types in England. He had not, however, proceeded far before he was stopped in the progress of this heretical book; when he returned to England, bringing

with him presses, type, printers, and book-binders, and finished the work in 1539. Henry VIII. had many books bound in velvet, with gold bosses and ornaments; and in his reign the stamping of tools in gold appears to have been introduced. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth some exquisite bindings were done by embroidery. The Queen herself used to work the covers with gold and silver thread, spangles, &c. Count Grolier seems to have been a great patron of the art on the continent; and all his books were bound in smooth morocco or calf, ornamented with gold.

The style of the books of Maioli was very similar to that of Grolier, or those of Diana of Poictiers—the specimens done for her being among the finest ever produced, and were no doubt designed by Petit Bernard. Roger Paine was the first Englishman who produced a really good binding; and some of his best works, such as French romances, were powdered with the fleur-de-lis. His books on chivalry had suitable ornaments; on poetical works he used a simple lyre; and he carried the emblematical style of binding as far as emblems ought to be used.

The bibliopegist is as essential as the typographer and the author, to the production of an elegant book; and the mechanic skill of the two former, no less than the genius of the author, deserves an appropriate recognition.

The various mechanical details and social economy of an extensive book-bindery like that referred to in the following pages, which is the oldest establishment of its class in New York, cannot, it is believed, prove altogether uninteresting to the lovers of literature and the public generally.

The principal warehouse (for a sketch of which, see frontispiece) is where the operations are conducted for binding books in cloth boards, the most prevalent style at the present day. In one department, females are engaged in folding the sheets, gathering them into groups, sewing them into the form of a book, &c.; while in this room are men pursuing the subsequent operations of glueing, pasting, cutting, hammering, pressing, &c., by which the book is brought to a finished state. This is a very busy scene, and one presenting much variety, from the distinct nature of the processes carried on.

Book-binding, as already intimated, requires the exercise of great care, dexterity, and taste, as well as laborious devotion to its several details, in order to insure success. There are separate and distinct branches of the business,—plain and ornamental book-binding, law binding, and blank book and ledger binding. The latter is a department in itself, and is usually conducted by stationers.

The various sizes of books, it is known, are designated by the number of leaves in which the sheet is folded. For instance, folio is two leaf, quarto, four leaves, octavo, eight, duodecimo, twelve to a sheet, and so on to the smallest sizes of 24, 32, &c. After the sheets of a book have been folded, they are collated by the numeral or letter placed at the foot of the first page of each sheet, in order to ascertain that the work is perfect. The next process to which it is submitted is that of pressing. This is accomplished by means of a hydraulic press. The back of the sheets is then sawed by machine, after which the sewing process commences.

The operation of sewing is conducted with great rapidity, since a female can sew two or

three thousand sheets a day. Many modifications of the process occur, according to the size of the book and the style of binding. Thus, the number of strings may be from two to five.

A *sewing-press* consists of a flat bed or board, from which rise two end-bars, connected at the

top by a cross-bar. Each successive sheet is laid flat on the bed of the sewing-press, with the back edge in contact with the strings, then opened in the middle, and fastened to the strings by passing a threaded needle backward and for-

ward through the central fold of the sheet; each thread, after passing from the inside to the out, being made to loop or twist round one of the strings before entering the sheet again. As soon as one sheet is fastened to all the strings, another is laid down on it, and fastened in a similar manner.

The sewer, seated somewhat obliquely in front of this machine, with her left arm passing round the left vertical bar (as seen in the annexed cut), proceeds to sew the various sheets to the bands, her left hand being behind the strings, and her right hand before.

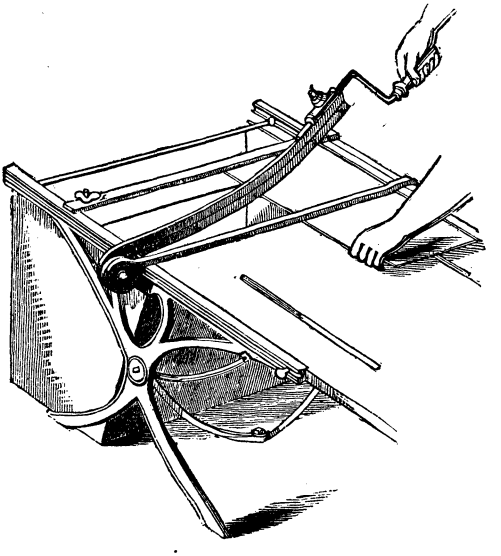
The modern invention of caoutchouc or India rubber binding, it should be remarked, supersedes the necessity of sewing. A flexibility is effected by this kind of binding, greater than can be produced by a sewed book; it also is so retentive as to bind every single leaf securely.

When the book is taken from the sewing-press, an inch or two of each string is left hanging to it; these are afterwards either scraped so thin as to be but little conspicuous, or are employed for fastening the book to its case. The back of the book—that is, the assembled

back-edges of all the sheets—is glued, to increase the bond by which they are held together. When the book has gone through one or two other minor processes, that one succeeds which is, perhaps, as remarkable as anything displayed in book-binding; viz. rounding the back and hollowing the front, as represented in the following cut.

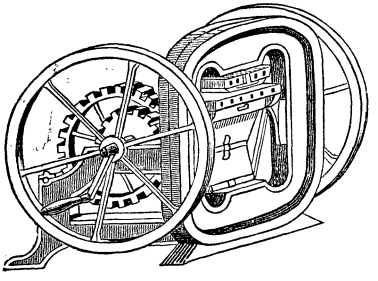
The back of the book being thus rounded, a groove is thereby formed, into which the mill-board is adjusted; the covers being fastened by the strings through the boards. The book, after

being properly adjusted between two boards, is screwed in a press, with one of the ends projecting a little above the level of the bench. The ends of all the leaves are then cut off while in this position, by means of an instrument called a "plough," the cutting edge of which, in its mode of action, is midway between that of a pointed knife and a plane-iron. The edges are all cut to a perfect level; and the book being reversed, the other end is similarly treated.



The above engraving represents the machine by which the boards are cut. These shears

are so arranged that they are made to cut with perfect accuracy, according to any pattern. The preparatory process for binding in leather varies somewhat from the foregoing, which relates to books bound in muslin. The embossing machine, delineated in the following



engraving, is used for stamping covers with various devices. It is of immense pressure, sometimes amounting to fifty tons. Two of these beautiful machines, costing $1000 each, constructed by Adams of Boston, are constantly in use in the above establishment. They are both worked and heated by steam, and are capable of producing about eighteen impressions each an hour. The entire amount of machinery used in this department of the New York Bindery may be estimated at $15,000. There is also a great variety of standing presses, from the gigantic

hydraulic to the simple lever power-press. So complete and ample are its appointments, that it is believed no similar establishment can boast superior facilities in this respect in the United States. The number of its employés varies according to circumstances from sixty to a hundred, and sometimes more. So extensive are the facilities of this establishment, that from 800 to 1000 volumes have frequently been bound in a single day.

The various details of the finishing and decorating process it is unnecessary to particularize. The ornaments on the back, sides, or edges of a book, are frequently done by a wheel or "roll," in the manner here represented. The edge or periphery of the wheel has the device in relief, and this, being wheeled along carefully over the surface of the book, leaves a corresponding depression.

The costly bindings in velvet and silk, the gold and silver clasps of expensive bibles, and all the niceties which the connoisseur in book-binding regards with such an admiring eye, we must pass over.

Book-binding has made wonderful advances

during the past ten or fifteen years; the multiplied uses of machinery having, to a great extent, usurped the former slow processes by hand.

We are indebted to the French for the invention of illuminated binding. This is relieved by the insertion of different colored leathers, in imitation of the illuminated MSS. and missals of the middle ages. The effect of this method of

inlaying is very rich and beautiful; uniting the attractions of the most elaborate gilding and skill in design with the beauties of the arabesque. By the aid of machinery, this gorgeous style of binding, which formerly was only to be produced at prodigious expense, is now made available at comparatively very moderate cost. Another specimen of ornate binding is that lately introduced in imitation of the antique oak-carving, and iron. The covers are of gutta percha, and present so close a resemblance to the former, that it is difficult to detect the difference between them. Great varieties of devices have challenged the ingenuity and skill of modern book-binding.

The process of gilding the edges of a book is a curious and delicate operation. After the edges are well scraped and burnished with the agate, they are then colored over with red bole or chalk, ground in soap, rubbed immediately dry with fine clean paper shavings, and again well burnished. This gives a richer effect to the gilding, and tends to hide any defects. The gold leaf is then cut into slips, and laid on. When it is required to give an additional degree of beauty and finish to any ancient pro-

duction, the edges are done in the antique style, by stamping them with flowers or other devices, characteristic of the date of the book. This mode, said to be peculiar to works of the 16th century, is now seldom used. The mode of gilding upon marbled edges, which Dr. Dibdin, in his "Decameron," styles "the *ne plus ultra* of the bibliopegistic art," is another process, demanding great expertness and skill. The effect is very beautiful, for, when finished, the marbling is perceived through the gold, and presents a very striking effect. Landscapes, and paintings of flowers in water colors, are sometimes produced in a similar manner, the luxurious effect of which is dazzlingly beautiful. The picture will not be apparent when the volume is closed, from the gold covering it, but when the leaves are spread out obliquely, it will be at once seen.

It remains only for us to speak briefly of the gilt embellishments, called embossed or arabesque bindings. These are executed with designs cut in plates of brass; after the impressions of which have been made, the gold is rubbed off to display the beauty of the device. Another rich style of ornamental binding is that of silk, satin, or

velvet, with decorations in gold and silver. The illuminated style of binding is one of the utmost magnificence, uniting the beauties of the arabesque and gilt ornament with the illuminations of the early missals and MSS. of the middle ages. This mode of binding was formerly produced at prodigious cost; but, although it is now comparatively seldom adopted, it is effected by a much less expensive process—that of inlaying various colored leathers.

By the important aid of modern machinery, a vast improvement both as to accuracy and beauty of workmanship, as well as economy, has been effected. In the New York Book-bindery, the most complete and systematic arrangements exist, so that all these advantages are thus rendered available to their utmost extent. It offers, therefore, peculiar advantages for gentlemen forming or enriching their literary collections, with whom economy is an object—the scale of charges for the various styles of binding being much below the average, while the workmanship is guaranteed of the best possible description. This establishment, which has been in successful operation for about fifteen years, is chiefly devoted to the

more elegant and costly styles of book-binding, in its several varieties of velvet, turkey, morocco, russia, calf, and sheep binding, &c.

Fashion, which arbitrates taste in everything else, rules in the matter of book-binding; successive epochs have had their various peculiarities, and have left on the covers of books the impress of their prevailing styles. During the middle ages, and at later periods, we find books were inclosed in massive covers of oak, grotesquely and sometimes beautifully adorned with carved devices, huge bosses, clasps, &c. There were also others of vellum, hog skin, and sheep skin, with heavy back bands and thick boards, bevelled off towards the edges. Of the more costly styles of the missals we have already spoken. Book-binding scarcely attained to the dignity of an art till within the past thirty years. During this interval, it has made advances commensurate with the progress of the arts of engraving and printing. This increased devotion to the cultivation of literature and the fine arts, is attributable to the fostering care and patronage of men of opulence and taste.

That the book-binding art is susceptible of yet

further improvement will be readily admitted. This is abundantly evident from the beautiful specimens of the art exhibited on some of the works recently issued by the London publishers, and by Mr. Putnam of this city, whose superior taste in this particular, as well as in the typographical excellence of his publications, has obtained such deserved celebrity throughout the United States. Books, as well as their authors, are deserving of good clothing; they are, indeed, not infrequently judged of by the popular eye, more by their exterior embellishment than by the claims of their intrinsic excellence. A genuine book would certainly sell none the less for being well bound; and it is well known that many an inferior literary production has attained even an extended sale, solely in consequence of its having an elegantly embellished cover.

It is a singular fact, that with the advantages of the highest cultivation of art before us, we should revert back to the gorgeous designs of the Gothic ages for the embellishment of our books. How far this preference for the antique is likely to become permanently popular it is difficult to decide. It is, we think, not improbable that it

will in a short time give place to a standard of taste more in unison with the modern arts of design. It cannot, however, be denied that great credit is due to the laborious research and artistic skill of Mr. Owen Jones, whose numerous and superb specimens of the illuminations of the mediæval epoch evince such surpassing beauty in their dazzling contrast of coloring, and splendor of the art of printing in gold and silver.

Thus much for the general history of book-binding. We may now be permitted to refer more particularly to the book-binding establishment of Messrs. Walker.

We have been able merely to give a general outline of the various processes of binding, and must necessarily omit more minute details. The costly bindings in velvet and silk, the gold and silver clasps of expensive illustrated works, including Bibles, Prayers, &c., and all the niceties which the connoisseur in book-binding regards with such an admiring eye, we must pass over in silence. It remains only for us to state, that so complete and extensive are the arrangements effected in this establishment, that the binding of an entire library can be superintended with as

much facility as a single volume, while equal accuracy, elegance, economy, and expedition may be confidently relied upon. It is one of the distinguishing peculiarities of the *New York Bindery*, that the several processes of book-binding are all performed within the establishment.

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